

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03
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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2348
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
USINT BAGHDAD
AMEXUY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
DIA WASHDC
SECDEF WASHDC
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1939

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, SY
SUBJECT: INTERNAL ROUNDUP

1. WE HAVE HEARD REPORTS FROM NUMBER OF RELIABLE SOURCES THAT AUTOMOBILES BELONGING TO SOME BAATH PARTY OFFICIALS IN HAMA HAVE BEEN DESTROYED OVER PAST FEW WEEKS. REPORTS DIFFER WHETHER OFFICIALS HAVE DIED IN THESE INCIDENTS: AS YET WE HAVE NO FIRM EVIDENCE ANY HAVE. SOME OF OUR INTERLOCUTORS HAVE SUGGESTED THIS LATEST OUTBREAK OF EXPOSIONS VARIES FROM PREVIOUS VIOLENCE BECAUSE DEVICES USED ARE MORE SOPHISTICATED. ONE SOURCE INDICATED THIS MEANT IRAQIS WERE PROBABLY BEHIND INCIDENTS. ANOTHER NOTED THAT SOME HAMAWITES HAVE DEVELOPED EXPERTISE IN MANUFACTURING EXPLOSIVE DEVICES IN THEIR SMALL WORK-SHOPS, AND ADDED THAT SOME ARTISANS HAVE EMERGED WHO ARE QUITE PROFICIENT IN THEIR TRADE. HE SAID THEY COULD
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BE WORKING FOR EITHER IRAQIS OR FOR INDIGENOUS HAMAWITE GROUPS SUCH AS THE YOUTH OF MUHAMMAD OR MUSLIM BROTHERHOOD.

2. IN CHECKING SOME OF THESE STORIES WITH REGULAR SOURCE WHO OFTEN MEETS WITH OFFICERS FROM RIF'AT AL-ASAD'S DEFENSE COMPANIES, SOURCE SAID HE TOLD RECENTLY BY SOME OFFICERS THAT HAMAWITES HAD DELIVERED "MESSAGE" TO ASAD

REGIME THAT THEY WANTED NO MORE ALAWITES ASSIGNED TO POSITIONS IN HAMA; ANY WHO WERE SENT WOULD BE ASSASSINATED. ACCORDING TO SOURCE, REGIME HAS MORE OR LESS COMPLIED WITH THIS DEMAND.

3. STORIES CONTINUE TO MAKE ROUNDS THAT ALAWITES BEING ASSASSINATED IN AREAS DISTANT FROM CAPITAL. ONE SOURCE CLAIMED THAT SECRETARY OF BAATH PARTY LATAKIA BRANCH WOUNDED IN CHEST FEW WEEKS AGO; ANOTHER SOURCE REPORTED PROFESSOR AT TISHRIIN UNIVERSITY IN LATAKIA MURDERED LAST WEEK.

LAST REPORT MENTIONED IN PRESENCE OF SOVIET DIPLOMATS, WHO ADMITTED THEY HAD HEARD THIS RUMOR ALSO BUT WERE UNABLE TO VERIFY STORY. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO CONFIRM EITHER REPORT. ACCORDING ONE GENERALLY RELIABLE SOURCE, HAMA VICTIMS WERE NOT RPT NOT ALAWITES.

4. ALEPPO APPEARS TO BE RELATIVELY PLACID AT PRESENT. ON RECENT TRIP TO CITY, EMBOFF TOLD THAT NO SARG OFFICIALS HAD BEEN ASSASSINATED THERE SINCE MURDER OF SECURITY OFFICIAL IN LATE DECEMBER (DAMASCUS 127). ALEPPIANS ADDED THAT NO EXPLOSIONS HAD OCCURRED SINCE HANGING OF CONVICTED TERRORISTS IN EARLY JANUARY. THEY ASCRIBED RESPONSIBILITY FOR MOST TERRORIST ACTS IN SYRIA TO IRAQIS, AND NOTED THAT IRAQI MONEY READILY AVAILABLE TO SYRIAN MALCONTENTS WILL MAKE RECURRENCE OF SIMILAR INCIDENTS LIKELY IN FUTURE.

5. CONTINUATION OF INCIDENTS AROUND SYRIA LENDS SUPPORT
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TO REPORT DATT HAS HEARD FROM GOOD SOURCE THAT MISSION OF DEFENSE COMPANIES HAS BEEN ALTERED. UNITS OF DC HAVE NOW BEEN DEPLOYED TO VARIOUS CITIES AROUND SYRIA TO SUPPRESS INTERNAL DISTURBANCES, WHEREAS IN PAST DC LARGELY CONFINED TO PROTECTING DAMASCUS AREA. SOURCE MENTIONED PARA 2 ABOVE TOLD US THAT MISSION OF ADNAN AL-ASAD'S STRUGGLE COMPANIES HAD RECENTLY EXPANDED IN DAMASCUS AREA, BUT HE UNABLE TO SUPPLY FURTHER DETAILS.

6. COMMENT: MANY DAMASCENES HAVE TOLD US ABOUT "CLIMATE OF FEAR" PREVAILING IN CITY SINCE DEATH OF AL-FADIL. THEY NOTE THAT DAMASCUS HAS NOT BEEN SCENE OF DISTURBANCES SINCE THIS INCIDENT, BUT BELIEVE OTHER INCIDENTS ARE INEVITABLE AND CONTINUE TO ASK WHO WILL BE NEXT. REGIME IS TAKING WHAT STEPS IT CAN TO FORESTALL MORE CIVIL UNREST BY DEPLOYING RIFAT'S DEFENSE COMPANIES TO TROUBLE SPOTS AROUND COUNTRY AND APPARENTLY FILLING GAP IN DAMASCUS DEFENSES WITH STRUGGLE COMPANIES COMMANDED BY PRESIDENT'S NEPHEW. HAMA REMAINS MOST TROUBLESOME

CITY FOR REGIME TO DEAL WITH.

7. COS SHIHABI TOLD AMBASSADOR MARCH 23 THAT AUTHORITIES
HAD ARRESTED THOSE REPOSIBLE FOR ASSASSINATION OF DAMASCUS
UNIVERSITY RECTOR AL-FADL. HE DESCRIBED THEM SIMPLY AS OF
"IRAQI PERSUASION." MURPHY

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